

Friday, 9 August 2024.

The National Skills Taxonomy Discussion Paper.

[REDACTED] is most concerned about the need for a carefully designed and implemented NST. One that improves the limitations of existing taxonomies while maintaining the quality and safety standards currently in place, particularly in the healthcare sector.

[REDACTED]

Community Services & Health is unique amongst industry sectors generally as being predominantly a public sector workforce.

As stated, the intention of the NST is to offer a common language and understanding of skills, connect the education, skills, and employment sectors and create a truly integrated domestic skills system that supports better outcomes for Australians.

This is a difficult task in the context of Community Services & Health. The industry and its sub-sectors are heavily regulated, including features of regulation relating to qualifications and training. Many occupations cannot be performed without qualification(s). For example, Childcare workers in some jurisdictions have a mandated requirement for a qualification or enrolment in training.

In addition, the goal of having "...a truly integrated domestic skills system..." sounds laudable. However, the quality accreditation systems throughout the industry have caused a great deal of specificity in the construction of qualifications. For example, "Team Work" or "Communication" as competencies have very specific meanings within community services & health. The desire for a truly integrated system can result in an area of skills being diluted to a lowest common denominator. Team Work and Communication are areas that have been considered opportunities for integration. However, they have been developed and refined over time very specifically for this industry and are highly contested between industries.

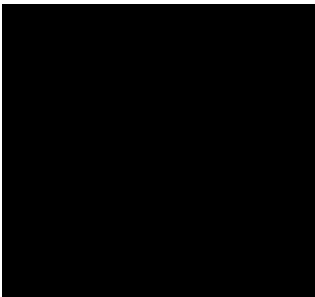
Benefits and limitations of existing taxonomies:

- Existing taxonomies offer organized structures for categorizing skills and aligning with industry standards.
- Current taxonomies have limitations in scope, currency, complexity, and standardization.

Features to retain in a new NST:

- Clear definitions, hierarchical structure, competency levels, and most importantly, alignment with industry frameworks.
- Compatibility with existing educational systems must be maintained, as well as flexibility.

[REDACTED]



Potential value of an NST:

- Whatever potential there may be, needs to be weighed against the unintended consequences or the outcomes from poor implementation.
- Improved communication across sectors, better labor market insights, and enhanced career pathways leading to clearer career guidance.

Challenges and unintended consequences:

- The potentially catastrophic risk of inadequately framing the established industry standards.
- The very real potential for role substitution in healthcare.
- Challenges in accurately framing some of the more complex occupations.

Implementation considerations (Specific concerns for healthcare professions):

- Generally, there is a need for careful implementation to maintain current safeguards.
- There is a uniqueness and complexity to community services & health roles and in particular the challenge of distilling them into quantifiable skills.
- There is a real concern about understanding that proposed changes will not undermine the scope-of-practice features for healthcare professionals.

Yours sincerely,